

HOW TO FIND A LAWYER IN OREGON

IN 6 (relatively) EASY STEPS

1. First things first

Summarize your situation on ONE PAGE. Briefly outline the problem, facts, timeline, what you've done to resolve the problem, and what you want. Put this outline in a file folder along with relevant documents you may need to duplicate later, for example, notes and timeline, receipts, letters, telephone records, etc.

2. Do you really NEED a lawyer?

Sometimes you just need an advocate, maybe an elected official or someone in a non-profit organization, or government agency assistance. Your [public library](#), [county law library](#), [Oregon state bar association](#), and [legal aid](#) office may be able to refer you to relevant legal and social service organizations or web sites. Public libraries have excellent print and online directories to help you find social service, non-profits, and legal advocacy organizations, so check out your public library, check out its website, phone them, or contact [L-net, the Oregon Libraries Network](#), where you can ask your question online.

3. Is legal SELF-HELP right for you?

Stop by your [county law library](#) and ask how to research your legal problem and about referrals. [Public libraries](#) will have *legal self-help* books. Read the information at these websites:

- a) [Legal Aid Services of Oregon](#),
- b) [Oregon Judicial Department Self-Help Resources](#),
- c) [Oregon State Bar](#),
- d) [HALT](#).

Self-help means lots of things: talking to a government attorney or an elected official or a neighbor, writing a letter to a manufacturer, drafting a legal document, etc. You may still want to talk to an attorney or a specialist to find out all your legal rights and responsibilities, but you will be doing a lot of the research yourself.

There are few "fill-in-the-blank" legal forms in Oregon. You will have to draft most legal forms yourself, though you will usually be able to find sample forms (see the Washington County Law Library's legal research guide on [Oregon legal forms](#)). If you need to represent yourself in court, you will have to research the laws that apply to your case, follow relevant procedural rules, and prepare and file documents. If you do decide to represent yourself, we recommend you consult an attorney (or [OJD family law facilitator](#), if applicable) at some stage in your research, preferably before you file any documents with the court.

4. So how DO I find a lawyer?

One way is to ask for a referral from someone you know and trust. Even if that referral is a lawyer who practices in another area of law, s/he may still be able to make a referral to the specialist lawyer you need.

There are many other places to find lawyer referrals:

- [Oregon State Bar Information & Referral Service](#), 503-684-3763 or 800-452-7636. (Ask about the type of lawyer you need, e.g. consumer, landlord-tenant, personal injury, bankruptcy, etc.)
- Some county bar associations and [other legal organizations](#) may also be able to make referrals.
- Online legal search sites: e.g. [findlaw.com](#), [lawyers.com](#), [martindale.com](#), and more from the [ABA](#).
- Lawyer web pages: Search [Yahoo](#), [Dogpile](#), [Google](#) (or any other search engine). Use key words like these: "Oregon lawyer attorney Hillsboro special needs trust". Be specific and be sure to include your city (if it matters), state, subject (keyword), and the words 'lawyer' and 'attorney'.
- Your [county law library](#) can refer you to [legal service organizations](#) in your area.

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5. I've found a couple of possibilities – now what?

Call the attorney and make an appointment; ask what documents to bring with you. Be prepared for an intake interview or consultation with the attorney's legal assistant before you talk to the attorney. Have your paperwork in order. *Note:* You do not have to hire the first attorney you meet. You need to respect and trust the attorney you do hire and it's perfectly acceptable to interview more than one before making a decision.

6. I've found the one (I think)!

Listed below are a few tips on working with attorneys, but if you want to know more, go to your public library and ask for books on the subject ([Nolo Press](#) and [HALT](#) have some). If you do nothing else, PLEASE:

- TALK to your attorney, ask questions, listen and take notes.
- Ask how you will have to pay for the law firm's services.
- Ask for a written fee agreement and for suggestions on how to keep your legal costs down.
- Ask what to do if you have questions for your lawyer and how to track the status of your case.
- Go to the [Oregon State Bar's \(OSB\) Public Information](#) pages.
- At the [OSB Member Directory](#) verify your lawyer is licensed in Oregon.
- Last, but not least, read "[Consulting a Lawyer](#)." This is from the Washington State Bar Association, not Oregon, but it's an excellent summary on when and how to hire a lawyer. Other very useful publications on hiring and working with lawyers can be found at [HALT](#).

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